JURGEN MASS

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The Ceremony of the Breaking of the Veil

Scene

A sort of chapel, adorned with very unchurchlike paintings; with four shrines, dedicated severally to St. Cosmo, St. Damianus, St. Guignole of Brest, and St. Foutin de Varailles; in the east is an altar with the image of Amon set up in the center, on the right is a paten with Cakes of Light, on the left is a cup of wine; in the south is a pink veil which conceals the adytum, wherein are black candles and sulphur burning before a scarlet ankh, whereon is a toad.

Officers

JURGEN - the pawnbroker;

ANAITIS - the Queen of Cocaigne, wears a gauzy tunic of mingled black and crimson with twenty-two openings in it, and a headdress of red coral, its branches radiating downward;

HOODED MAN - the eunuch, wears long garments, striped with white and yellow, bears a large lance, its tip red with blood;

ALECTO & TISIPHONE - two of the Eumenides, in the form of naked children, both girls, one of them carrying a censer, and the taller one bearing in her right hand a vividly blue pitcher half filled with water, and in her left a cellar of salt.

(Audience is seated. HOODED MAN banishes as he sees fit. ALECTO and TISIPHONE assist him as necessary. After banishing, they stand in center of chapel, facing west. JURGEN and ANAITIS are at entry way to chapel in northwest)

JURGEN: And now, and now, my dear, I would suggest that we enter into the pursuit of those curious pleasures about which you were recently telling me.

ANAITIS: I am very willing, since there is no one of these pleasures but is purchased by some diversion of man's nature. Yet first, as I need hardly inform you, there is a ceremonial to be observed.

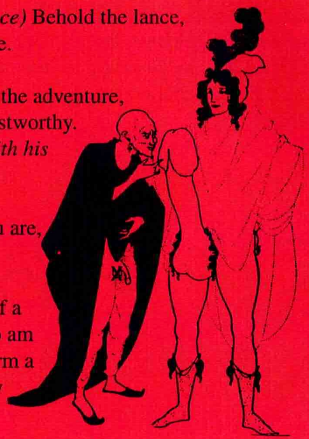
JURGEN: And what, pray, is this ceremonial?

ANAITIS: Why, we call it the Breaking of the Veil.

JURGEN: Well, I am willing to taste any drink once.

(ANAITIS leads JURGEN into the chapel to stand before HOODED MAN and the EUMENIDES.)

HOODED MAN: *(holding up the lance)* Behold the lance, which must serve you in this adventure.



JURGEN: *(taking the lance)* I accept the adventure, because I believe the weapon to be trustworthy. *(he holds the lance erect, shaking it with his right hand)*

HOODED MAN: So be it! But as you are, so once was I.

JURGEN: Behold, I am a man born of a woman incomprehensibly. Now I, who am miraculous, am found worthy to perform a miracle, and to create that which I may not comprehend.

ANAITIS: *(she takes salt and water from the child and mingles them)* Let the salt of earth enable the thin fluid to assume the virtue of the teeming sea! *(she kneels before JURGEN, touches the lance, and strokes it lovingly)* Now may you be fervent of soul and body! May the endless Serpent be your crown, and the fertile flame of the sun your strength!

HOODED MAN: *(voice high and bleating)* So be it!

JURGEN: That therefore which we cannot understand we also invoke. By the power of the lifted lancece *(he takes ANAITIS' hand in his left hand)* I, being a man born of a woman incomprehensibly, now seize upon that which alone I desire with my whole being. *(ANAITIS rises and he leads her to the altar)* I lead you toward the east. I upraise you above the earth and all the things of the earth.

(He seats her upon the altar, and that which was there before tumbles to the ground. ANAITIS places together the tips of her thumbs and of her fingers, so that her hands make an open triangle upon her breast. JURGEN stands facing her. She waits, dark eyes glittering and breath coming fast. Now the HOODED MAN and the EUMENIDES perform their share in the ceremonial, which part it is not essential to record. Then they stand behind JURGEN)

JURGEN: O cord that binds the circling of the stars! O cup which holds all time, all color, and all thought! O soul of space! Not unto any image of thee do we attain unless thy image show in what we are about to do. Therefore by every plant which scatters its seed and by the moist warm garden which receives and nourishes it, by the commingling of bloodshed with pleasure, by the joy that mimics anguish with sighs and shudderings, and by the contentment which mimics death,—by all these do we invoke thee. O thou, continuous one, whose will these children attend, and whom I now adore in fair-colored and soft woman's body, it is thou whom I honor, not any woman, in doing what seems good to me: and it is thou who art about to speak, and not she.

ANAITIS: Yea, for I speak with the tongue of every woman, and I shine in the eyes of every woman, when the lance is lifted. To serve me is better than all else. When you invoke me with a heart wherein is kindled the serpent flame, then you will understand the delights of my garden, and what joy unwordable pulsates therein, and how very potent is the sole desire which uses all of a man. To serve me you will then be eager to surrender whatsoever else is in your life; and other pleasures you will take with your left hand, not thinking of them entirely: for I am the desire which uses all of a man, and so wastes nothing. And I accept you. I yearn toward you, I who am daughter and somewhat more than daughter to the Sun. I who am all pleasure, all ruin, and a drunkenness of the inmost sense, desire you.

JURGEN: *(holding his lance erect before ANAITIS)* O secret of all things, hidden in the being of all which lives, now that the lance is exalted I do not dread thee: for thou art in me, and I am thou. I am the flame that burns in every beating heart and in the core of the farthest star. I too am life and the giver of life, and in me too is death. Wherein art thou better than I? I am alone: my will is justice: and there comes no other god where I am.

HOODED MAN: So be it! But as you are, so once was I.

(The EUMENIDES stand one on each side of ANAITIS, and wait there trembling. JURGEN rests the red point of the lance in the open triangle made by the fingers of ANAITIS)

JURGEN: I am life and the giver of life. Thou that art one, that makest use of all! I who am but a man born of a woman, I in my station now honor thee in honoring this desire which uses all ofa man. Make open therefore the way of creation, encourage the flaming dust which is in our hearts, and aid us in that flame's perpetuation! For is not that thy law?

ANAITIS: There is no law in Cocaigne save, Do that which seems good to you.

ALECTO & TISIPHONE: Perhaps it is the law, but certainly it is not justice. Yet we are little and quite helpless. So presently we must be made as you are: for now you two are no longer two, and your flesh is not shared merely with each other. For your flesh becomes our flesh, and your sins must be accounted our sins now: and we have no choice.

(JURGEN, holding the lance in his right hand, places a Cake of Light between the lancepoint and ANAITIS' breast)

JURGEN & ANAITIS: Flesh of our flesh!

(JURGEN takes the cup in his left hand and holds it under thelancepoint)

JURGEN & ANAITIS: Sins of our sins! *(they draw slightly apart, dropping the cake into the cup, and cry:)* Hriliu! *(JURGEN and ANAITIS kiss. JURGEN steps back, and elevates the cup)*

JURGEN: I am willing to taste any drink once! *(He drains cup and eats cake in silence. ANAITIS fills JURGEN's empty cup, takes it in her left hand, and his lance in her right. JURGEN drops a Cake of Light into the cup, then he steps back. ANAITIS elevates thecup)*

ANAITIS: I am willing to taste any drink once! *(She drains cup and eats cake in silence. HOODED MAN steps up between ANAITIS and JURGEN and takes the empty cup in his left hand and the lance in his right. ANAITIS fills the cup, JURGEN drops in a cake. HOODED MAN elevates the cup)*

HOODED MAN: I am willing to taste any drink once! *(He drains cup and eats cake in silence. He gives the cup and lance back to ANAITIS and JURGEN, and departs to make room for the next communicant. Everyone present communicates with cup and lance, except for the EUMENIDES who have no choice but to share vicariously in JURGEN and ANAITIS' communion. When the celebrants have all communicated and resumed their seats JURGEN lifts ANAITIS from the altar. They search around the chapel until they come upon the pink veil. JURGEN thrusts with his lance, and breaks through the veil, opening it to reveal the adytum)*

ALECTO: *(utters a brief wailing cry, as the lights in the chapel are dimmed till the black candles in the adytum are all the light that remains)*

TISIPHONE: *(follows with soft laughter)*

(JURGEN walks into the adytum and laughs. He turns to face ANAITIS)

JURGEN: Well, well! But you are a little old-fashioned, with all these equivocal mummeries. And I did not know that civilized ersons any longer

retained sufficient credulity to wring a thrill from god-baiting. Still, women must be humored, bless them! And at last, I take it, we have quite fairly fulfilled the ceremonial requisite to the pursuit of curious pleasures.

ANAITIS: *(sadly)* Dear fool, it was not wise, when you sang of the Leshy who control the Days, to put an affront upon Monday. But you have forgotten that. And now you laugh because that which we have done you do not understand: and equally that which I am you do not understand.

JURGEN: No matter what you may be, my dear, I am sure that you will presently tell me all about it. For I assume that you mean to deal fairly with me.

ANAITIS: I shall do that which becomes me, Duke Jurgen—

JURGEN: *(interrupting)* That is it, my dear, precisely! You intend to be true to yourself, whatever happens. The aspiration does you infinite honor, and I shall try to help you. Now I have noticed that every woman is most truly herself—in the dark.

(JURGEN pauses to gaze at ANAITIS with a twinkle. She gives him a glowing smile in return. He blows out the black candles. Darkness)